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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000481

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DS/OP/NEA

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: MAOIST STUDENTS SHUT DOWN KATHMANDU SCHOOLS FOR TWO DAYS

REF: KATHMANDU 410

1. (SBU) Facing the threat of violence, most educational institutions in Kathmandu remained closed March 4 and 5 after Maoist-affiliated students called a "school strike." Exceptions included the Embassy-supported Lincoln School, the British school, and a boarding school run by the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), which all remained open. No Maoist-related violence was reported in Kathmandu on the strike days.

2. (SBU) Several violent incidents occurred at local schools in the run-up to the strike, however. On March 1, a group of about a dozen Maoists entered a private school in central Kathmandu at mid-day and used gasoline to set fire to a computer lab, causing at least USD 25,000 in damage. While fleeing the scene, the vandals reportedly yelled out calls to obey their March 4-5 strike. Press reports quote police officials saying the school may have been targeted because of its links to a university in Sikkim, India. On the same day, a business school in an adjacent neighborhood was attacked in a similar fashion. Three computers and a photocopier were destroyed in that incident. Post was unable to determine whether, as seems likely, the attacks were carried out by the same gang.

3. (SBU) Also on March 1, Maoists pamphleting at a local college stabbed and critically wounded a student leader affiliated with the Nepali Congress Party. Post also received reports of physical assaults on two school principals and threatening letters and phone calls to schools.

4. (SBU) Mainstream student groups issued public denunciations of the school strike. In the past, the Maoist-affiliated students have denounced the government's decision to charge fees for primary school education and have called for reductions in other school fees.

5. (SBU) Note: The EAC met and provided input to the Lincoln School director. She then made an independent determination that there was no threat and the school remained open. As a precaution, RSO arranged for additional police protection at the school. End Note.

5. (SBU) Comment: The Maoists have once again shown that they have no qualms about targeting children. They have conscripted or pressed into service children in remote areas, and by targeting educational institutions in Kathmandu they are limiting opportunities for young people in urban Nepal. Their behavior in the run-up to the strike shows that they will continue to resort to threats, vandalism, assault and murder to get their way - even in broad daylight. End Comment.

MALINOWSKI